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ABSTRACT

The National Writing Project (NWP) at Work monograph series describes NWP work, often shared informally or in workshops through the NWP network, and offers detailed chronological accounts for sites interested in adopting and adapting the models. The New York City Writing Project (NYCWP), with over 20 years of inservice experience, has learned that one key to improving teacher practice and student performance in reading and writing across the curriculum is developing stable, long-term professional development relationships with schools. NYCWP now has 17 teachers working as on-site teacher-consultants in six elementary schools, eight middle schools, and 22 high schools spread throughout the five boroughs of New York City. This monograph presents slices of the work done by NYCWP. Following an Introduction (Marcie Wolfe), articles are: "Developing Collaborative Relationships in a School Setting: Taking an Inquiry Stance in Professional Development" (Nancy Mintz) and "Whole School Reform: A Collaboration Between a Teacher-Consultant and a Principal" (Alan L. Stein). The first article focuses on a multi-year collaboration with one middle-school teacher to examine more effective ways of supporting students as readers, while the second article presents its author's teacher-consultant work as extending beyond classrooms to a collaboration with teachers and with the principal to develop a new school culture. Includes notes. Appended is a course description. (NKA)

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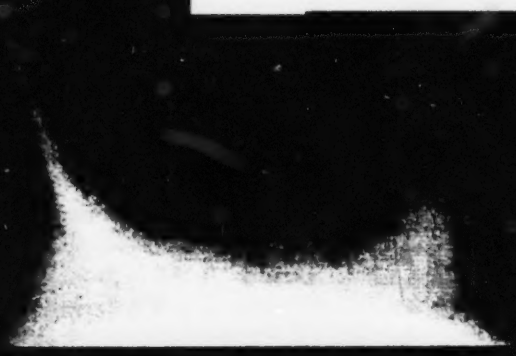
NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT AT WORK

Volume 1, Number 2

Models *of* Inservice



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On-Site Consulting: New York City Writing Project

by Nancy Mintz and Alan L. Stein
with an introduction by Marcie Wolfe

New York City Writing Project
Lehman College, The City University of New York

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The National Writing Project at Work monograph series documents how the National Writing Project model is implemented and developed at local sites across the country. These monographs describe NWP work, which is often shared informally or in workshops through the NWP network, and offer detailed chronological accounts for sites interested in adopting and adapting the models. The programs described are inspired by the mission and vision of NWP and illustrate the local creativity and responsiveness of individual writing project sites. Written by teams of teachers and site directors – the people who create and nurture local programs – the texts reflect different voices and points of view, and bring a rich perspective to the work described. Each National Writing Project at Work monograph provides a developmental picture of the local program from the initial idea through planning, implementation, and refinement over time. The authors retell their journeys, what they achieved, how they were challenged, and how and why they succeeded.

Please see the inside back cover for more information and a list of all available titles in the NWP at Work series.

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National Writing Project
Berkeley, California

NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT

The mission of the National Writing Project is to improve the teaching of writing and improve learning in the nation's schools. Through its professional development model, the National Writing Project recognizes the primary importance of teacher knowledge, expertise, and leadership.

The National Writing Project believes that access to high quality educational experiences is a basic right of all learners and a cornerstone of equity. Through its extensive network of teachers, the National Writing Project seeks to promote exemplary instruction of writing in every classroom in America.

The National Writing Project values diversity—our own as well as that of our students, their families, and their communities. We recognize that our lives and practices are enriched when those with whom we interact represent diversities of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and language.

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FOREWORD

National Writing Project at Work, a series of monographs written by writing project teachers and site directors about their work, debuts with four monographs that describe models of inservice. Over the last few years, teachers, site directors, and national directors of the National Writing Project have begun to document and disseminate knowledge generated by NWP local site initiatives. These initiatives, inspired by the mission and vision of the NWP, include a wide range of teacher professional development models, including school site writing series, teacher research projects, statewide reading projects, summer institutes, school site coaching, and professional development designed by teachers. The monographs illustrate the local creativity and responsiveness of individual NWP sites. Collectively, they are an important body of teacher knowledge about the multiple forms of inservice teachers experience as useful and respectful. They show that there are many forms of successful professional development and support the NWP belief that there is no one right way to do this work.

Professional development of teachers is a pivotal component of school reform, and teacher voices are critical for this work to be successful. In these monographs, we hear why and when teachers commit to this work, what it does for them as educators, and how it helps change their professional self-images. We learn the authors' ideas behind their designs for reform, their grassroots theories about what it takes to transform school culture, teaching, and learning, and what support they need to do this work. The monographs show how school reform happens—how in a multitude of ways, large and small, in schools across the country, teachers make it work.

Looking at this first set of monographs, we notice several trends. First, the authors bring their extensive experience in schools, their reputations as leaders, and their extensive insider knowledge of their schools, districts, and states to their work. They wield the power of their insider status, their networks, and their knowledge of the systems to effect change. Second, they take on new roles, roles they have never played before, and, consequently, they take risks. The risk taking involves failures as well as successes, and a notable strength of the monographs is the honest voice in which each is written.

Third, while some of the monographs are reports of professional development that originated with NWP's Project Outreach Network with its explicit mission to engage teachers of students of poverty, all of the projects in the monographs have equity at their core. Each monograph describes work that targets a population of students and teachers not being served. Fourth, the teachers and site directors were—or learned to be—politically canny, seeking alliances, partnerships, and funding for their work. Fifth, these teachers are not always working in friendly climates. They are attempting reform with staffs who have burned out, or are nearing burnout, with high teacher turnover, with too many simultaneous initiatives—

in short, with all the realities of current public school education, especially in urban and rural schools of poverty.

We are pleased that the first volume of NWP at Work will include monographs about inservice programs. The work described here will have much to add to the debate about effective professional development. In these times, when a significant percentage of teachers leave the profession after five years, these monographs offer opportunities to engage teachers intellectually and feed their teaching souls. These are models of school reform that keep teachers teaching.

It is with great pleasure and pride that we introduce the National Writing Project at Work series. We are hopeful that teachers, site directors, policymakers, academics, and all who work in the realm of school reform will find much to think about in this series.

JOYE ALBERTS
Associate Director, National Writing Project

ELIZABETH RADIN SIMONS
Program Associate, National Writing Project

INTRODUCTION

The New York City Writing Project (NYCWP), a program of the Institute for Literacy Studies at Lehman College/The City University of New York, has been providing support in language arts and literacy education to public schools and teachers for twenty-two years. The founding directors of the NYCWP, John Brereton, Sondra Perl, and Richard Sterling, established our site in July 1978, a mere four years after the first summer institute was held at University of California, Berkeley. We therefore consider ourselves among the "first wave" of writing project sites following the original Bay Area Writing Project model.

The NYCWP is an urban writing project site. Participants in our invitational summer institutes come from all five boroughs of New York City. While we occasionally attract a suburban teacher or a teacher from an independent school, the overwhelming majority of teachers in our project come from New York City public schools. The public schools are our recruitment target; we focus on reaching teachers and students in these schools out of our long-standing commitment to social justice, equity, and capacity building. Many of our exemplary teacher-consultants have dedicated their professional lives to working with our city's most underserved students.

Our twenty years of inservice experience have taught us that one key to improving teacher practice and student performance in reading and writing across the curriculum is developing stable, long-term professional development relationships with schools. These relationships, built over time and within the context of each school, develop out of three mutually reinforcing components of our program:

- on-site, after-school seminars in the teaching of reading and writing for teachers from all disciplines and grade levels
- the presence of an on-site teacher-consultant two days each week, whose job is to plan lessons and projects with teachers, team-teach, recommend and provide resources, encourage the publication of student writing through anthologies and displays, and organize peer dissemination of good practices throughout the school
- direct work with the schools' administrators, focused on their educational goals.

NYCWP's school-based inservice program began in 1981 when two high school teacher-consultants (Carla Asher and myself) and one of our founding directors (Richard Sterling) received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). One of FIPSE's areas of concentration that year was "education in the workplace." In our proposal, we argued that the writing project's model of bringing together exemplary teachers for summer institutes could be the foundation for education in the teachers' workplaces—their schools.

We proposed a school-year program in which the writing project would work each year with a critical mass of teachers in four targeted high schools. Our goal was to integrate writing across the curriculum, thereby reforming instructional practice and improving student outcomes. We described a two-pronged approach that, astonishingly, remains at the heart of our current work: sixty hours of after-school seminars in the teaching of writing held each year at each school for twenty to twenty-five teachers, and on-site assistance from writing project teacher-consultants. The after-school seminars were led by teacher-consultants from our growing network of NYCWP teachers, and Carla and I originally did the on-site work. We spent four days in the schools and the fifth day at Lehman College, developing and sharing materials, getting help from each other and from Richard, and documenting our work. Almost twenty years later, the consultants (now a larger and more unruly family!) still gather on Fridays for the same purpose.

The FIPSE grant enabled us to establish the basic architecture of an enduring partnership program with the New York City Board of Education. When the grant ended in 1984, the New York City Board of Education assumed the cost of the program and doubled its size. The experience of the three FIPSE years suggested that spending one year in a school and then moving on was insufficient for the ambitious changes we hoped to effect. For the post-FIPSE phase, we convinced our partners at the Board of Education—senior administrators whom we had kept involved in and informed about the program—that the model required three years of work in each school, and they agreed to this idea. Later, in 1989, partly in response to teachers in our project who felt that our work had concentrated too exclusively on high schools, we sought and received funding from Chase Manhattan Bank to extend our school-based model to middle schools. As with the FIPSE grant, when the Chase funding ended, local community school districts carried the cost of the program.

The program has continued since that time, adjusting to policy changes in testing and curriculum, adapting to the climate of urgency in some of the low-performing schools we've served, but holding on to the essential values in the work: that teachers-teaching-teachers is a powerful professional development strategy, that the act of writing has the ability to transform individuals, that personal transformation contributes to schoolwide change, and that collaboration is essential to reform. All of these values are illustrated in the two pieces that follow. Although the inservice efforts conducted and described by Nancy Mintz and Alan Stein occurred in schools serving different student populations in two different communities, the schools are fairly typical by New York City standards: schools struggling to meet achievement targets, maintain a staff of qualified teachers, and serve linguistically and culturally diverse children from low-income families.

NYCWP now has seventeen teachers working as on-site teacher-consultants in six elementary schools, eight middle schools, and twenty-two high schools spread throughout the five boroughs of New York City. We have supported the program through an array of public and private funders including, most recently, the DeWitt Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund, which provided four years of funding to the writing project through its Students at the Center initiative (SATC). Nancy Mintz's

position was funded as a Board of Education contribution to SATC. Alan Stein's position had already been contributed by the Board of Education to our high school program; in preparation for SATC, Alan began his work at the Erasmus schools in the year preceding our DeWitt Wallace–Reader's Digest funding.

As Alan's piece illustrates, one of the greatest benefits to the NYCWP of participating in Students at the Center was that it allowed us to reflect upon and develop more intentional approaches to working with administrators while we continued to provide professional development to teachers in participating schools. Another benefit was the timeline: the terms of the grant (as we had designed it) required four years of work in each school, a luxurious period, even by our standards, in which on-site consultants like Alan and Nancy were free to experiment, develop important relationships in the schools, and build their work gradually.

We select on-site consultants from the large number of teachers we have worked with throughout the years. Often, a teacher-consultant who has worked with a consistent group of teachers in a particular school will invite someone to begin co-leading the after-school seminars or urge a teacher to attend our invitational institute. Alan Stein, originally a history teacher at Bayside High School in Queens worked for many years with Helen Ogden, the NYCWP on-site consultant serving his school. Similarly, Nancy Mintz, originally a language arts teacher at Robert F. Wagner Junior High School in Manhattan, began her involvement in the writing project when we began serving her school. She subsequently participated in the Urban Sites Writing Network, wrote articles for our newsletter, and began to co-lead inservice seminars. There are those teachers who would make excellent on-site consultants, but who cannot imagine themselves out of the classroom and away from a daily involvement with students. We involve them in our program as after-school seminar leaders and coordinators of special programs.

As Carla and I did in the program's early days, NYCWP on-site consultants, led by site director Linette Moorman, gather at Lehman College every Friday to debrief about their week's work. Consultants also use their Fridays to develop new seminar topics and try out new workshops. They also work as a study group to explore new developments in the teaching of reading, for example, or otherwise stay current with theory and research. Consultants are further supported by a structure we initiated to support all school-based professionals within the NYCWP's umbrella organization, the Institute for Literacy Studies (ILS). This structure, the ILS Teaching and Learning Inquiry, developed by ILS Director of Research and Evaluation Cecelia Traugh, Linette Moorman, and other ILS project directors, allows teacher-consultants to meet monthly for three hours to consider themes in their work (such as how we enter a school, or what our approach is to working with teachers in their classrooms), read together, and share documentation or narratives based on their inservice work. The weekly NYCWP program meetings and the monthly ILS inquiry group together provide a rich learning experience for teacher-consultants that directly informs their work in schools.

One final thing: NYCWP on-site teacher-consultants write! Nancy and Alan, like their colleagues throughout the city, keep ongoing notes about their work. They write at NYCWP program meetings and for the ILS inquiry group. We try to enact within our structures the value we place on writing as a tool for discovery and documentation. And all teacher-consultants write mid-year and end-of-year letters to Board of Education administrators, describing and analyzing their work in schools. Both Nancy and Alan drew on their years of documentation to write the pieces that follow; in a way, they had been writing these pieces all along.

Each of these accounts represents a slice of our work. Nancy focuses on her multi-year collaboration with one middle-school teacher to examine more effective ways of supporting her students as readers. Alan's narrative presents his teacher-consultant work as extending beyond classrooms to a collaboration with teachers and with the principal to develop a new school culture. Together, their writing suggests the work that the NYCWP attempts to accomplish throughout the city. In some cases, the work does not take hold, particularly in schools that are unable to maintain stability in their teaching staff or focus administrative time on substantive educational issues. Sometimes the match between a teacher-consultant and a school staff does not work. But the descriptions offered here present some of our inservice challenges as we've successfully addressed them. Alan's and Nancy's work depict the careful attention, knowledge, and flexibility that are the hallmarks of all NYCWP teacher-consultants as they collaborate with teachers, students, and school leaders to foster instructional change.

MARCIE WOLFE
Director, New York City Writing Project

DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN A SCHOOL SETTING: TAKING AN INQUIRY STANCE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT[1]

by **Nancy Mintz**

In my favorite young adult novel, *Dicey's Song*, the author, Cynthia Voigt, has Gram tell Dicey that she has to learn how to hold on, to reach out, and to move ahead. For me, reaching out has also been about letting go. I think those three ideas hold true in the collaborative work I've done with teachers: I've had to hold on to what I believe and value, to let go of trying to enact the vision of my own classroom and students in someone else's classroom, and to move forward in my understanding of how to successfully support teachers as they take risks with their practice. This monograph is about how I, as a new teacher-consultant for the New York City Writing Project (NYCWP), learned to work alongside an individual teacher as she, in turn, worked toward building her students' capacities as independent readers and learners. It is a personal story, yet at the same time has implications for others about the nature of collaboration.

• • • •

In 1996, I left the classroom to work for the NYCWP as an on-site teacher-consultant in New York City middle school classrooms. This is the story of how I faced a central dilemma of my new role: bringing my twenty-eight years of classroom experience to bear on my work with teachers in their classrooms while at the same time stepping back in order to let them learn. From my perspective, it is a story about learning to enact, in a new setting, my belief that teaching is a kind of collaboration. As a new consultant, I needed to learn how to support teachers as they worked on integrating unfamiliar writing and literacy practices into their very real classroom settings. I had many questions: How do I help teachers take risks and expand their practices? How do I develop relationships that are truly collaborative? How do I avoid the image of "outside expert" while translating all I know and value from my experience teaching children, so it appropriately fits with this new kind of teaching? How do I stay true to the things that I value, while working in schools where contrary values predominate?

Over the past four years, I have learned a great deal about myself and about what it means to work in collaboration with other professionals in their school and classroom settings. Consulting has been interesting and difficult to learn, and as with each group of students I've taught, each teacher I work alongside has his or her own style and way of being in the classroom. I have had to learn that it is not about making them into teachers like me, but helping them to discover who they are as they integrate more reading and writing into their existing curriculum.

1 The complete monograph of "Collaborative Conversations for Literacy Development: Professional Development in a Middle School Classroom" (November 2000, Occasional Papers Series, Cecelia Traugh, editor) can be obtained from the Institute for Literacy Studies, Lehman College-CUNY, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West, Bronx, New York, 10468-1589; 718-960-8758.

YEAR ONE: 1996–1997

During my first year of on-site consulting, I was placed in two New York City middle schools: one was located in the North Bronx, the other in Washington Heights in upper Manhattan. Both schools had been selected to participate in Students at the Center (SATC), a project funded by the Dewitt Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund. The NYCWP model for professional development usually provides for two days per week of on-site support for teachers as they begin to experiment with and integrate new literacy practices into their classrooms. Teachers are also invited to take an on-site graduate seminar. These seminars are experiential in nature. Teachers are asked to write frequently in class and at home in order to examine their own writing processes and explore the implications for their classrooms. The NYCWP usually remains in a building for three years.

The SATC grant, however, provided for only one day a week of on-site consulting in each school, but was to extend over a period of four years. During the first two years of the grant, one graduate seminar per semester was taught. I co-taught the seminar each semester of that first year. Since we needed to accommodate the staffs of both schools in one course, it was held at Lehman College in the Bronx rather than on-site at either school. The decision to hold the seminar at Lehman limited the number of participants from the Washington Heights school to only three teachers.

Intermediate School 143 (IS 143) is a very large middle school in the Washington Heights section of New York City. The population is predominantly Dominican and approximately 87 percent of the 1,900 students are second-language learners. At the time I began working at the school, a large percentage of the staff were veteran teachers, some of whom had been there over thirty years. The school also recruits a large number of Teach For America[2] participants, who generally stay two or three years before moving on to graduate school. The school has a strong principal and is efficiently run. Each grade is set up into three teams. The sixth grade is the most heterogeneous of the three grades since test scores are not readily available when the classes are made up. The other two grades are divided based upon standardized reading and math scores. There is one bilingual/English-as-a-second-language team in each grade that includes newcomers through transitional students. The next team in the grade has all the top students, and the third has the rest of the school population.

Due to policy changes, when I began at IS 143, attendance at team meetings, which were designed to foster collaboration among teachers, was no longer mandatory, and teachers did not have common planning time. Collaboration among team members was encouraged but was sporadic and depended on the individuals involved. Then, as now, periods were forty minutes in length and were subject-area specific. Instruction was largely teacher centered: desks were set in rows, group work was done infrequently, and most teachers stood in front of a silent class disseminating information. There were some innovative teachers who were working toward a more student-centered environment. The school district was also traditional and produced curriculum guides, workbooks, and pacing calendars on a reg-

2 Teach For America is a national corps of recent college graduates who commit two years to teach in under-resourced urban and rural public schools.

ular basis. There was a strong emphasis on reading instruction, and extensive test preparation was the norm.

My first year consulting at IS 143 was hard in a number of ways. I saw myself as an experienced teacher and hoped the teachers I would be working with would perceive me as a colleague who had some useful ideas to share. Instead, I found that the teachers and the administration both viewed me as an outside expert, there to instruct people in the "right" way to teach writing. I realize now that I probably didn't do much to dispel that idea. I was new to consulting and I missed having my own students. I kept asking myself: What is the work? How can I name it? How is it shaped by who I am? Is it meaningful work for me?

I had to think long and hard about the type of "professional development" I had received over the years. I knew that the only people who had successfully worked with me in my classroom were those who respected what I had to bring to teaching and to the conversations we had about theory as it evolved into my classroom practice. Those people were few and far between. In fact, the only professional development organization that had provided this type of respect was the NYCWP. I hoped that my respect for teaching and teachers would drive the work I did. I found I had to fight hard not to be judgmental and critical. I kept holding on to the vision of the school I came from—which, although large and traditional, had successfully restructured into interdisciplinary teams—and of myself in my classroom. That vision often got in the way of my seeing what was there at IS 143, and hampered my ability to offer support.

Developing a Working Relationship with Grace Raffaele

The summer before I entered IS 143, Lehman College held a four-day seminar for teachers from all the SATC schools who had selected the NYCWP as one of their partnerships. At that seminar, Grace Raffaele emerged as someone who was already a reflective practitioner, experimenting with new ways to teach reading and writing. As a graduate student at Columbia's Teachers College, she had been immersed in constructivist[3] principles of learning and had begun to put these student-centered ideas into practice in her classroom.

During my first year of consulting, however, Grace was acting as the school's librarian and did not have a classroom of her own. Prior to that, she had been a highly regarded communication arts teacher. Teaching was Grace's second career, and she was still a relatively new teacher. She was highly committed to the school, which she had attended as a student, and was on IS 143's Middle School Initiative Committee looking into redesigning the school's program. She was one of the people responsible for selecting the NYCWP as a professional development partner for the SATC grant.

As a consultant, I was assigned space in the back room of the library, which was where Grace and I began our conversations. Consulting in the first year builds slowly.

3 Constructivist principles are a set of ideas grounded in the basic principle that students learn best when they are allowed to construct their own knowledge and build their own understanding of concepts. As a project, SATC worked to ground its approaches in constructivist ideas of learning. The work of the writing project is compatible with this set of ideas.

A consultant is thrust into a new school environment, meeting new people, trying to understand school culture, and searching for a way of working within that context. A lot of it is about collecting "local knowledge," being an observer and looking for opportunities. The work Grace and I did that first semester centered around the journals of eighth grade students participating in IS 143's after-school school-to-work program. More importantly, we were cautiously getting to know each other as teachers and as individuals. Grace asked me a lot of questions about pedagogy, and I asked her questions about IS 143. We looked at student journals and talked about how to use them to promote student learning.

As a highly regarded professional at IS 143, Grace was my link. Even though she was unable to take the graduate seminar that first semester, she was the person I depended on to ground me in school culture and introduce me to teachers she felt would be open to working with me. She took the second-semester graduate seminar, and our conversations became more intense. We used the same language and had similar ideas and values about what learning should look like in middle school classrooms. In May of that first year, Grace and I also designed a staff development afternoon where we invited teachers to share their successful student-centered practices and student work with each other. Our hope was that this would help teachers begin to share their expertise with each other on a regular basis. We were hoping to develop a community of learners consistent with the writing project belief that the best teachers of teachers are other teachers.

YEAR TWO: 1997–1998

Developing and Implementing a Sustained Piece of Work

The second year, I continued working in the two middle schools. However, that year, at both school districts' requests, I spent two days in each school. In order to get more IS 143 teachers involved, I decided to hold two different seminars on-site at each school during the fall semester. Since Grace had taken the spring seminar, I asked her to co-teach one at her school. At each school, I was in the position of training two new course coordinators. Since I was the experienced member of each teaching partnership, I felt responsible for designing the seminars. In hindsight, I can't help but realize that my perception of myself as I entered each of these relationships was, in fact, that of an "expert." Both of the gifted classroom teachers I taught with that year helped me to understand how collaborative work grows slowly over time as trust develops. When I reread my journals, I noticed how in the beginning I called the seminars "my inservice" and how that "my" gradually changed to "our." As my teaching partners and I became more comfortable with each other, I was able to let go of control of the seminars. I grew to realize that I now did my teaching in these arenas, and what worked were the same strategies that made me a successful middle school teacher. Over the years, I had come to believe that teaching was about forming collaborations with students. My own teaching was about providing ways to get my students to manipulate material and talk together and help each other construct knowledge. I could lay the groundwork and guide them,

but eventually I had to trust my middle school students to take on the responsibility and direction for their own learning. I trusted and respected my students, qualities that are essential in successful collaborations.

Thus the seminars began to work for all of us—me, my new teaching partners, and the participants—as we grew to trust and respect each other's expertise. This trust and respect took time to grow. What helped me was the realization that we were all part of the same inquiry. When I understood that, I was able to give up control and provide the opportunity, for my teaching partners and all the participants, to exercise their expertise and strengths. I realize that the reason I love facilitating seminars is because it helps satisfy my own desire to be part of a community of learners. We were engaged with the material and each other. We shared personal stories, putting a human face on difficult issues, which allowed for the discussion of ideas. We were making sense of things together, and thinking about how we could create learning communities within our classrooms. We were learning to look at our students and our work descriptively, trying to keep judgment out of the equation. Early on that first semester, I realized that in order to be more successful in my day-to-day consulting, I had to become more of an observer and listener, an approach I had cultivated and worked on in my teaching over the years, but not in my consulting. At that point, I really did let go of the idea of "expert" and began to approach my work as a learner.

My second year at IS 143, Grace was back in the classroom and invited me into her sixth grade class to observe, to be another pair of eyes, and to get to know her students. We worked together to design a poetry unit that allowed students to read and discover poetry on their own. It was our first attempt at helping her students respond to literature of their own choosing. Grace and I began to develop a way of working together that satisfied both of us. We met and planned. I visited the class, observed, and wrote in my journal. Grace wrote in her journal. Then we met again to discuss what we had noticed and ways to proceed. When Grace agreed to co-teach the graduate seminar, it became another instance of our collaboration, this time with our colleagues as the learners. Planning sessions became more than just designing the course—we got to know each other's ideas about literacy learning more in depth, and we began the reading work. In our early discussions about how to get her students to become independent readers and responders, I gave Grace an article I had written about my work with a class of lowest-percentile readers in the tracked—and at that time, highly traditional—middle school where I had been teaching. It described a time when I had taken a risk in my own practice based on my belief that students become proficient and lifelong readers by giving them time to read and time to write and talk about books of their own choosing. Grace also believed that reading was a personal engagement with the text, and that active readers would make their own connections. She had been reading Louise Rosenblatt's work on reader response theory, Nancy Atwell's seminal work on the use of reading and writing workshops in the middle school, and more recently, Harvey Daniels's work on literature circles. She agreed with what these and other educators were saying about student-centered learning, but within the existing environment of IS 143 she was reluctant to change her practice.

Spice Reading World—IS 143's First Reading Circle

In early December, the school administration at IS 143, worried about the upcoming reading tests, divided one of Grace's sixth grade classes into two separate classes for reading instruction. She decided to take a risk and use the top-down decision to her advantage. We decided it would be a wonderful opportunity to experiment with reading circles, an idea we were both interested in exploring as a way to increase students' "efferent and aesthetic" (Rosenblatt)[4] responses to literature. Although reading circles were not a new idea, no one at IS 143 had tried them. We both realized that we first needed to change student expectations about what reading in school could be like and establish some new habits. Grace had already been working on this before her original class was split into two. We had to give the remaining fifteen students clear and usable strategies for thinking about what they read. In addition, we both believed that the students needed to take charge of their own reading and had to be given the opportunity to make choices about what they would read. We began by letting the students select a name for the reading class. The Spice Girls were all the rage, and so "Spice Reading World" was born. Students received their own reading response logs in which they could record their personal responses to the literature they would be reading.

In February, Grace and I started the class by talking, writing, and sharing our reading histories and our attitudes toward reading. We were active participants and shared our own reading with the group. We selected Nicholasa Mohr's *El Bronx Remembered* to introduce the students to the different ways they could respond to literature. We adapted Harvey Daniels's literature circle role sheets (1994) to meet the needs of the class.[5] When we felt they were ready to strike out on their own, we rummaged through the book room and selected four full-length novels, three by Roald Dahl—*Matilda*, *The Witches*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*—and *The Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden. Students chose which novel they wanted to read. Grace and I worked together to divide the class into four groups so each student got his or her first or second choice of novel to read. We also wanted to make sure that there was a range of ability levels in each group.

I spent two periods a week in the class so that Grace and I could sit in on the reading and discussion. We provided writing prompts and pushed talk to further sophistication, helping to model ways to talk about literature. We documented our work together in our teaching journals. At first, I wrote about the work we did after each class meeting. Later on, I began to experiment with recording my observations of students during class. The hardest thing to do was capture the student conversations during reading groups.

It was in this context that we truly became collaborators. Grace's decision to do the reading circles was aided by knowing I would be there two days a week, not only to help plan, but to support the work being done by the students. I was excited by the prospect of working intensively with her around a piece of work that she wanted to do. As Grace and I became members of Spice Reading World, we were collaborating with each other and building support for students to become co-constructors of

4 These ideas have their source in the work of Rosenblatt. Briefly, efferent responses refer to understanding the information of the text, aesthetic responses refer to appreciating the beauty of the text.

5 Sample role sheets are available in Daniels's book, *Literature Circles* (see references). Electronic (PDF) copies of the role sheets and chapters of the book are also available online at the Stenhouse Publishers website: www.stenhouse.com.

knowledge. It was not easy. Grace and I had very different teaching styles and strategies for dealing with students. Although I was invited into her classroom, these were not my students and this was not my classroom. How could I work in someone else's space over an extended period of time? Who has ownership of the work? How would I handle discipline? Initial planning was easy; putting it into practice was difficult. I was still learning to let go of control of the work. As the weeks progressed, facilitating the graduate seminars helped me to realize that I had to take an inquiry stance in Grace's classroom and become more of an observer and less of an expert. I spent time carefully observing student behaviors. I needed to wait for Grace to ask me to participate, and I needed to write what I hoped were nonjudgmental observations of students. And we both had to learn to take a back seat as students became more involved in responding and sharing their reading with each other.

The Journals

The classroom work and the collaboration became visible through my journal writing. I began to share my journal with Grace, and it was those observations and our talk about them that helped us understand what was happening in her classroom. Grace always had her journal in front of her as we talked. She would take notes and refer to her own writing. I didn't realize it at the time, but my extensive journal writing had become a model for Grace, who had been using her journal for planning and writing quick notes to herself. She began to share the contents of her journal with me, and we both began to watch the kids more closely and record their talk.

Even though I had let go of control of the work, I held on to the role of being a learner and a member of a learning community. In this way, both of us began to use the tensions within the collaboration to make changes in what we were doing. Our personal journal writing and observations of students were part of our learning to work alongside each other. We used our journals as we talked about what we thought was happening in the room, but we shared selectively. It became a reciprocal relationship in which we both learned a great deal, yet not until I began to write this piece did we actually exchange complete journals. Reading Grace's journal was an eye-opener for me. We had taught the graduate course together, I had spent a year in her classroom, and we had become good friends, yet it was still hard to hear some of what she had to say. It made me think long and hard about what it means to enter into a collaboration with another professional.

The journal excerpts I have included here are intended to give the reader an idea of how important they were to our learning. They show two different people engaged with the same process: supporting students as they become active readers and responders. We notice different things and have a different focus. Grace, as the teacher in the classroom, focuses on the business of teaching; she notes the things that need to be done and those things that are going well. My journal entries are more ethnographic and depict the inquiry stance I'm struggling to maintain.

In her first journal entry, Grace writes that she needs to change some procedures, notes something I did in the class, and one thing that went well.

Grace's journal, February 2, 1998
I needed to set up some clearer procedural things, like writing the date, story name, etc., what I write doesn't need to be copied, resolve comprehension before responses. A little awkward trying to write and control talk at the same time. Helps to have a second person but not helpful when that person "over directs" as when Nancy said and signaled "enough" when I was prompting for more understanding. I'm glad I spent the comprehension time and will continue to since they were unclear of who was being referred to—Rewrote the signs. Looks great and it's their work!

In my journal entry dated the same day, I am participating and trying to capture what is happening in the class. I talk about our reading. When I read Grace's journal, I was surprised to find out that she had perceived that I was over-directing. I can't imagine that I could have signaled "enough," but I must have. I know that I was grappling with finding a comfortable way of working within her space.

Nancy's journal, February 2, 1998
Grace started by asking the students to write, "When is reading fun?" She had asked this same question in mid-December but they had never written about it and she wanted to have this writing as part of their reading response log. I sat in the class and did the writing with them. After writing we shared our responses with each other. We began to read the story "A Very Special Pet" from Mohr's *El Bronx Remembered*. Grace and I feel that we needed to do a few stories with the students in order to give them experience in responding to reading on their own. We read for a while. We took turns reading aloud. I noticed Michael never read aloud and I wondered why. Grace and I both stopped the reading to deal with vocabulary—*cantankerous*. I explained about compound words at the break in a line. We need to have dictionaries on all the tables. We stopped and wrote down questions we had about what would happen next.

The next day, when I handled a behavior problem in class, I was worried that I had taken charge and talked to Grace about why I did it. Grace had chosen not to say anything to me about "over-directing," and in the entry dated February 3, she states that we had "settled into a comfortable balance." I felt that way, too, but I also knew that there would be other opportunities to step on each other's toes as the work continued. I had been so deeply involved in classroom teaching for so many years that I was having trouble letting go.

Grace's journal, February 3, 1998
I'm more comfortable with the pace. Check comprehension. Nancy suggested we note strange words as we go along. Make a list of "words I want to know" and "I wonder...". Kids need help recognizing compound words, especially when hyphenated at the ends of lines. We should have a dictionary at each table. Talk to them about reading aloud. Consider reading silently before aloud. I'm glad I didn't say anything to Nancy; it seems to have settled into a comfortable balance. More thoughts on reading groups: I was surprised that Kelvin was able to sound out the word *cantankerous* and also surprised that Jirayda seemed to struggle with reading aloud. Other than Nancy's presence, I'm not sure why Michael was so reluctant to participate. This has happened before, not sure why. Louis and Roscal are constant distractions. Starting to notice Zahiah's having difficulty when called to read. Quiet, yet she is a constant affirmation that there are kids seeking knowledge and interested in learning.

My journal for this day really shows how difficult it was for me to maintain an inquiry stance. I fluctuate between staying descriptive (recording key events and capturing the atmosphere of the class) and getting annoyed at student behavior to the point where I actually step in and let the students know that respecting others is an important part of becoming a community of learners. In reflecting on this entry, I also realized how much I was modeling teaching for both the students and for Grace.

Nancy's journal, February 3, 1998

We read "Shoes for Hector" [from *El Bronx Remembered*] today. We chose it because it was short and could be done in a single period. Tomorrow they have the PAL test and won't be able to do the reading workshop. Grace didn't want to start anything new and not finish. We read the story aloud to the class. They could follow along with us, or just listen. Everyone chose to read along except Michael who seems to resent my presence in the group.

After we finished reading we asked the group to write a response—what they were thinking, etc. (I suggested adding to or rewriting the end.) When we finished the story, Roscal said, "That's it? I want more." I suggested that he write that down and then put the "more." It was a valid response. I asked them to notice their talk after the story was read and to put that talk in their papers. We gave them five minutes to write. Michael didn't. We went around the room and read our responses. Louis rewrote the end because he was dissatisfied. His response also showed his regard for education and pride in the Latino communities' ability to achieve. Many students wrote that they liked the story because they could relate to it. It was ordinary and they all had an experience that was similar. After Vanessa read, Roscal made a *chi chi chia* sound that Michael picked up on. They couldn't take not being the center of attention. I asked Roscal why he made the sound. Did it indicate his approval of Vanessa's response? The other students tried to explain what it was. I didn't need the explanation. I watch TV, too, and I am familiar with the ad [for Chia Pets]. I saw it as a way to disrupt and gain the attention of the class. I felt I needed to let him know that I was aware of what he was doing and that it was rude and disrespectful and unacceptable in a class discussion.

We get to Michael who passes. I push him a little and he says he didn't write anything because it was boring. What a surprise when I told him that was a good response. What was boring about it? He couldn't say and I made the point that we need to push ourselves as readers to determine the why. That way we can select books that we like to read. It's OK to find something boring but it was also important to notice that what one person found boring, another person liked, in this case it was the ordinariness of the story.

Michael and Roscal tick me off. They have to know that they are not in control of this group and that rude behavior is unacceptable. Grace says Michael isn't always this way. He has been every time I'm there. I would guess that at this point he doesn't like me too much because I call him on his behavior.

I hope I didn't take over too much. I told Grace that I just couldn't let them do what they were doing. I know this is not my class and that I shouldn't be disciplining students but I just couldn't let this one go.

The next journal entries, from March 23, were written when we had been working together for about two months. I felt comfortable in Grace's room and really had a sense of who she was as a teacher. I respected her expertise and wanted her to share her understandings about her students as learners. She felt comfortable enough

with me to ask me to model a fishbowl,[6] yet not comfortable enough to let me know when I stepped over the bounds and "directed." As the students became more actively involved in the reading, we had to begin to shift the way we worked with them. We had to let go and allow them to become more independent. At the end of my journal entry, I realized that Grace was right and we needed to do one more story as a whole group. I was anxious to move on to the novels. After the last fishbowl, I agreed with her and thought I had acknowledged that, but according to her entry, it is clear that she felt differently. I thought we had come to a mutual agreement, and I felt comfortable informing the students of our decision. I was wrong. Even at this late date, tensions and misunderstandings still existed.

Nancy's journal, March 23, 1998
Grace and I talked before class. She's not happy with the roles. "The role sheets seem to over-focus the kids. They don't seem to generate discussion." I'm feeling the same way after working with them in both Amy and Elease's [two teachers in another school] classes. I'm noticing the different pace of the groups in this classroom. One group didn't talk at all because they were still reading.

Grace has been keeping a journal on these reading groups. We need to spend more time comparing impressions. She knows these students much better than I do and really has a better sense of them as learners. I am constantly discovering things about them. This is a strange role for me. I'm working with the kids, and I'm aware of how that is going, but I'm also modeling for Grace, keeping an eye on what I'm doing so that we can talk about it. Actually Grace and I do well as a team. I've sort of taken over the fishbowl piece since she asked me how to do it and told me she felt unsure of being successful with it.

Last Wednesday, Grace asked the kids to talk about what kind of discussion they had in their Tuesday groups. Interesting, because I saw the students as still working on their role sheets and Grace saw this as discussion. I thought that this Mon. the class was to be in discussion groups. The responses the students gave Grace made me realize that I have preconceived notions of what constitutes a discussion. The students did talk quietly as they worked on the role sheets and I should have paid more attention to the type of talk the sheets were generating. What the groups did do was literally work in pairs as they prepared the roles. They were, in essence, truly discussing the story as they helped the discussion leader come up with questions. They read aloud interesting passages as they helped the passage picker select things to read. The same help was given to the connector. During this time I walked around helping groups to formulate questions and working with word pickers as they used the dictionary and selected words. Grace did the same thing. It seems to me now that this was valuable talk, possibly more valuable than what occurred as we did the fishbowl. The actual discussion on Mon. felt contrived, the talk last week was authentic. What is this saying about the process and about these students? Both Grace and I feel that the role sheets are contrived and limiting. They feel like just another worksheet. The kids are used to these so there was a comfort level with them, but they didn't seem to go beyond what the sheet asked them to do. Why would they? This is what they know how to do. I need to pay attention to the talk around filling out the sheets. I'm sure there is a lot there that is valuable...

Where do we go from here? Grace and I both agree we need to model this again as a whole group. We'll read a story—the whole group will read the same one but they will work in groups to make meaning, doing the role sheets, etc. This way, when we

6 Fishbowling is a way to model responding to work. Students in the middle of the group have a discussion, and the other students circle around them to watch. Each of the students watching can be given a specific task or something specific he or she is responsible for noticing and reporting back to the group.

fishbowl everyone will be able to answer and ask questions. This round will give me more time to observe them as they work and have a guide as to what to look for.

I do feel good about this work. I like the kids and I'm getting a real sense of how they work and who they are. I believe Grace is feeling supported and that she's learning a lot about her own teaching. I think her journal and her questions will reflect this.

In her journal for the same day, Grace talks about her reaction to my observations, which I have tried to keep nonjudgmental when I talk with her about them. It is clear throughout my journal entries that what I observe makes her wonder and question. Like all good teachers, she wonders if she's done enough to prepare her students to work in reading groups. Reading her entry also made me think about how carefully I need to shape what I say when working with teachers. How are my observations accepted by teachers? Grace is experienced and confident. What happens when I work with an inexperienced teacher?

Grace's journal, March 23, 1998

I'm still unhappy with the "discussion leader" role. It seems that each person in his or her role is a leader of that particular discussion. And, in fact, the goal is for everyone to be contributing something to each type of discussion.

I'm also not happy with the role sheets themselves, however I'm reluctant to say, "chuck 'em" entirely. I think the focus is good but it goes too far—is too individualized. Does not encourage or even imply a sharing or a group component in the completion of the role.

After talking to Nancy before class, I was feeling unhappy with what I had—or had not—accomplished so far with this group. Have I shown them and allowed them the time to use active listening? Have I generated the types of discussions I want them to now be able to do on their own? Have I focused them on their reading? In all cases I think the answer is yes, a little, but not enough. And I almost missed a valuable opportunity to strengthen their abilities by moving on too quickly. Fishbowling was a needed valuable activity. Gives them confidence and gives us a chance to model. Works much better because we are smaller in numbers, so there are not 26 students watching 4; 12 watching 4 is much easier to focus the "observers." This they did very well. Had I given them time, I think they were on their way to discussion, but this will ensure they are clearer about what they are doing.

There's something else going on here. When someone says the kids are not doing this or that, we (me?) may be unconsciously translating or equating that with we (me?) the teacher, has not done what was needed! This is the second time I've caught myself having this "I'm-not-doing-good" reaction when in fact the critique was meant to clarify the situation, not to bring up faults—in either students or teachers. It was meant as observation yet somehow came across as judgment. I can work through that, but I worry that others—other teachers—may not. What a difficult place the consultant must find, and that "place" may be different with each teacher they work with.

Nancy says we'll do one more story as a group. She says they're not getting it. This is why and when we become teacher-directed. And this is what I said yesterday, and today—I said we should do a story or book together. And at that time she disagreed.

> Now, when it's clear that it's needed she "directs" by telling the class herself. Does she remember what I said earlier? I'm feeling like I need to hear her say I was right about this.

YEAR THREE: 1998–1999

Building Capacity

In 1998, Grace became a fellow in the NYCWP invitational summer institute, using the work we did together as a springboard for her own ideas around using visual literacy to help students become independent readers and responders. During the third year of my consulting at IS 143, at Grace's invitation, I brought new and interested teachers into her classroom to watch her teach, using her class and students as a way to observe and talk about practice. We talked together often, but I did not work in her classroom.

Along with Jereme Engels, my SATC professional development partner, Grace and I designed an inservice seminar called An Inquiry into Teaching. Grace and I used our journals and shared what we had learned about reading during our collaboration the previous year. Our collaboration and our use of teaching journals became the model for teacher-participants as they began to take risks within their own classroom settings. This seminar provided an opportunity for both new and experienced teachers to talk about their practices and to support each other. Since the teaching journals were so valuable to us, we asked participants to experiment with them as a way to reflect upon, and talk about, their practice. The sharing of journal entries became an integral part of the seminar. Teachers began to visit each other's classrooms in order to practice observing in a nonjudgmental way. The ideas they took away from these visits, and the suggestions they made to each other, helped create a strong community of practitioners. Some found they had students in common and began to do some interdisciplinary planning. As a part of this seminar, every teacher selected an aspect of their practice that they wished to look at closely and presented a review of an activity or practice to the group.[7] They looked at a range of activities, some choosing to focus their observations on the teaching of writing and others on classroom management issues.

My consulting work that semester centered around visiting classrooms as an extra pair of eyes, helping the seminar participants to find a focus for their reviews, and suggesting ways to document their work. When I wasn't at IS 143, Grace gave up her preparation periods to talk with other teachers, help them design lessons, and think through their focusing questions.

7 "Reviewing Activities in the Classroom" (1993), and "The Review of Practice for Teachers and Other Educators" (1991), are two of a family of descriptive, documentary processes developed by Pat Carini and colleagues at The Prospect Center (see references or check their website: www.prospectcenter.org/institutes.html).

Consulting As Collaboration

I believe that good consulting, like good teaching, is a collaboration. My work with Grace confirmed this. I've learned a great deal about consulting in general through my work with one teacher and one class. It took Grace and me four months to get her students to work collaboratively and to use talk to "make meaning" from text. They needed to break old habits in order to begin to see the possibilities in working with each other. Grace and I needed to provide them with strategies to do this so that they could trust each other and themselves. In essence, we provided them with a common language and structure for talk. We also allowed for choice, listening and respecting their ideas and supporting them as they tried out new ways of working and thinking. I believe the same approach is best for consulting work in the schools.

It is essential to start out with a respect for teacher knowledge and experience and to recognize what people are already doing. Making that respect visible helps to develop trust over time. Grace and I talked for a full year before I ever entered her classroom. As we got to know each other, we realized we held the same beliefs about teaching and learning. Since neither one of us had a classroom of our own during that first year, we shared old work. During that first year, it was easy for us to talk about theory or about old work, but in the second year, when I began working in her classroom with her students, it was necessary to create a different structure for our talk. Since we both used teaching journals as a private space for self-reflection, it seemed natural that they would become part of that structure. Another thing that helped our collaboration was the shared work we did while team teaching the first on-site inservice seminar. We both became part of a community of learners and worked on broadening the community of teachers who would share our vision of what learning could look like at IS 143.

As a consultant, I found it important to maintain a descriptive inquiry stance and to constantly gather local knowledge in order to learn the culture of a school and find the cracks or places to situate the work. Grace knew the other teachers in the school who shared our thinking, and she became my link to the larger school community, encouraging teachers to participate in the inservice seminar. We recruited teachers who were beginning to rethink their practice and who needed a comfortable, nonthreatening place to experience new ideas, experiment, and talk. On-site seminars were a way to ground the work in the school, and they provided me with new people to work alongside. It provided Grace with a larger community of like-minded professionals with a shared agenda and a common language.

My personal vehicle has been through descriptive journal writing. My journal is where I collect my observations and reflect on my practice. I'm sure other processes for data collection will work just as well as long as there is time to reflect upon what has been gathered. My journals have been essential to my work. What I write allows me to maintain an inquiry stance. Like the students' reading logs, my writing is a place to begin the talk. In the journals, tensions and differences are revealed, and by sharing them with others, I have been able to find ways to make those differences

generate thoughts and even actions rather than have them persist as obstacles. Although I come into a school as a consultant for the writing project, what I bring is everything that worked for me as a teacher of middle school students. I am continuously discovering ways of consulting with teachers that are congruent with what I value. I come into the work of consulting with a deep belief in student-centered practice; a love of students, young adult literature, and learning; and a deep belief in, and respect for, those special people who choose teaching as their life's work.

YEAR FOUR: 1999–2000

The Circle Widens

In my fourth year as a consultant, the circle widened as the support system that emerged out of the seminar An Inquiry into Teaching continued to grow and took on a life of its own. Many, but not all, of the teachers who participated in the seminar took another inservice seminar that I co-led with two other IS 143 teachers who had emerged as teacher-leaders. Our focus that semester was on the teaching of writing to second-language learners.

The SATC grant came to an end at the close of the spring semester. It was my last year as a teacher-consultant at IS 143. The principal at IS 143 recognized the changes in teacher practice and attributed the changes to the on-site support. In a conversation we had at the end of the year, she said, "The most important part of the program has been your presence in the school and your support of teachers. You've worked with teachers whose instincts were good and you have helped them change their teaching. What's more important is that the work that was done was geared toward our student population. You did not come in with a program or demand that things be done a certain way." She has asked the district for additional funding to continue the on-site work.

Whether or not this happens, I feel good about the work that has been done at IS 143. Grace left at the end of 1999, preferring to work in a small-school environment where teacher collaboration was encouraged and valued. There are a number of teacher-leaders in place who are committed to keeping the conversations going. These teacher-leaders encourage new teachers to talk about their successes and their failures, and they have opened their classrooms as models. Since we have used the descriptive processes in the seminars, there is an existing structure and a commitment to continue to examine student work and teacher practice. I feel that something powerful has been set into motion.

WHAT I'VE NOTICED ABOUT MY CONSULTING

There really is no formula for on-site consulting. The work, like teaching, depends on too many variables. Each site, each teacher, is different, and a consultant needs to first learn what those variables are and then learn to adapt the writing project work to meet the stated and often unstated needs. On-site consulting and inservice work can be successful if the teacher-consultant keeps that in mind and constantly works toward developing collaborative talk. These are some of the things that I have noticed about the way I approach consulting.

- It is essential to start out with a respect for teacher knowledge and experience and to recognize what teachers are already doing. Making that respect visible helps to develop trust over time.
- As an observer in other teacher's classrooms, I read and write with students. If asked to share, I do. I constantly model literacy behaviors.
- Everything I do is modeling—from journal writing to language use to asking questions. Do I point that out to teachers? Not necessarily. I hope that eventually they will begin to notice what I'm doing and it will creep into their practice.
- As I work with individual teachers, I am always questioning myself. What's going on here in this classroom? What is the teacher doing? How are the students responding? Who's paying attention? Who isn't? Why? What do I notice that will be helpful to share with the teacher? What do I keep back for another time? What is the teacher ready to hear? How do I shape my responses?
- I've learned never to tell someone my opinion immediately after a lesson. Doing so has led me to lots of trouble. I need time to eliminate my judgments from what I observed. I usually say, "Thank you, I loved when you did such and such," or "Did you notice how involved the boy in the front was with the lesson?" Comments of that nature. I make an appointment to talk later.
- If I don't have another appointment after visiting a class, I find a place to write. While in the class, I use a double-entry notebook to record what's happening on one side and my thoughts, questions, ideas, suggestions, and yes, judgments, on the other. I use those notes to shape my writing and work through what I will say when I talk with the teacher. I make choices.
- A conference with a teacher is often like a writing conference. I say back what I saw carefully avoiding commentary. I ask teachers how they feel the lesson went. What worked for them? The students? What didn't work? What do they feel they need help with? That's where our conversation begins.
- Sometimes, before I visit a teacher's classroom, I ask what he or she wants me to pay attention to and use their suggestions to focus my observations.
- I never go into a teacher's classroom without being invited, and I always tell them that I'll be taking notes and why. Now that I'm over fifty, it's easy to explain my inability to remember details. All the young teachers I work with smile sympathetically at that, and usually say something like, "My mom has that problem too." The older, more experienced teachers commiserate.
- How I handle initial consultations with teachers usually sets the tone for further work. I have learned when to stop pursuing a teacher. After hearing "I don't really have the time" a few times, I let it go. I've been working on not taking it personally.
- I bring to consulting all of who I am as a person and an educator. I am an avid reader of young-adult fiction and my knowledge of this genre is extensive. Lately, my work has been with middle school social studies teachers, and I've immersed myself in

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historical fiction and nonfiction. I have an extensive library of materials that I willingly share with teachers and with students. I'm always bringing in boxes of fiction, poetry, and picture books, as well as photographs and other primary source documents. Many times, the materials pave the way in to working more extensively with a teacher. I am a pack rat and I throw nothing out. I save teacher-made materials including my own, and after asking permission, I share them with other teachers doing similar work.

- I try to hook people up with each other in their own school or across schools.
- I make myself available when I am on site, and everyone I work with has my email address.
- I have learned how to listen for what teachers really need and want from me.
- The ideal situation is to do a piece of sustained work with a teacher and a class, as I did with Grace and Spice Reading World. That isn't always possible, but it is the most rewarding part of this work for me.

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WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM: A COLLABORATION BETWEEN A TEACHER-CONSULTANT AND A PRINCIPAL

by Alan L. Stein

In 1991, after teaching for over 30 years, I became a teacher-consultant for the New York City Writing Project (NYCWP). For the last five years, I have been a consultant at the Erasmus Hall Campus School for Humanities and Performing Arts, one of the city's most difficult schools. It was there that I forged a partnership with the principal, Carolyn Wagner, there that I found myself in the position of learner as well as innovator, and there that I engaged the issue of whole-school reform for the first time. I had believed previously that if I worked with teachers on using writing as a tool for learning and thinking, the teachers collectively would have an impact on the whole school. When I began at Erasmus Humanities, it was a school on the verge of extinction and required wholesale restructuring to survive and serve its students. In working with teachers and in identifying leaders who might help to bring about reform, the principal (along with a handful of teachers) turned out to be the key element. This was all very new to me.

This monograph is a narrative of a school under siege, a school that was fortunate to have a principal who had a vision of change that was aligned with the beliefs of the New York City Writing Project. In my first year (1995–1996), I spent many hours observing, got to know the principal, and began to see what kind of work I could do. The second year (1996–1997), my work received the support of the DeWitt Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund Students at the Center (SATC) grant, allowing me to spend sometimes as many as four days per week at the school and help to put in place structures that would develop and take root in the next three years, sometimes in very unpredictable ways.

Becoming a Consultant

I received my baptism in consulting at Clara Barton High School, a traditional school in Brooklyn, that is an education option school for students interested in the health services professions. Clara Barton was where I learned that change begins with observation and conversation, not with imposition. I learned that if a staff developer enters a building with a blueprint for change, she or he is likely to miss the possibilities. A staff developer must be open about his intentions, but needs to consider and respect the views and values of others. An agent of change has to be open to the possibility of being changed himself, and allow for change to take place over time. The process of change is unpredictable and creates its own momentum. Therefore, a consultant must be reflective and vigilantly aware of what is taking place. The NYCWP values the empowerment of the voices of teachers, and through these voices, change must become a collaborative process. It cannot be mandated

from the top. These are statements of belief. These values came to be severely tested and challenged when I arrived as a teacher-consultant at the Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn.

Erasmus Hall High School: Background and Division

Erasmus Hall High School had seen better days. It is the second-oldest public high school in the country and in 1992 had celebrated its bicentennial. In the first half of the twentieth century, Erasmus had been the passageway for upwardly mobile Jewish and Italian youngsters of immigrant families from Flatbush and environs, and the high school of nationally known entertainers and sports stars. As the Jewish and Italian families became middle class, they left for the suburbs, taking with them the stable tax base needed to support public works such as education. Caribbean immigrants and African-American families from the South moved into the neighborhood, and the emporiums of Brooklyn's Flatbush Avenue metamorphosed into bazaars of beauty salons, fabric stores, and curry and patty shops. The story of post–World War II urban America was played out in Flatbush as public services declined. The neighborhood crime rate accelerated.

Today, Erasmus students come from backgrounds of poverty, illiteracy, and single-parent families; many children grow up before their time. Violence is not an everyday occurrence in the school, but the threat of it is. One day in the winter of 2000, I could not get to the subway until the victims of a shootout were removed from the streets.

Erasmus Hall High School was a big, traditional high school where it was easy to be anonymous whether you were a student or a teacher. There was chaos in the halls; alarms and fires were frequent. There were some innovative ideas, but these were considered odd and doomed to failure by much of the staff. During the 1980s and early 1990s there was experimentation with longer class periods and interdisciplinary teaching. The attempts were haphazard, but some teachers, especially English teachers, got a taste of the possibilities for change.

In 1993, as a result of poor math scores and low attendance for Regents Examinations[1], Erasmus was identified by the state as failing, placed on the Schools under Registration Review (SURR) list, and slated for remediation. New York State and the local superintendency mandated a split of Erasmus into three smaller schools, each bearing the name of Erasmus but each designated as a specialty educational option school: Science and Mathematics, Business and Technology, and Humanities and Performing Arts. The three new schools, each with approximately 800 students, were given one year to raise reading and math scores and be removed from the SURR list. It took the state several years to realize that it was dealing with three new schools rather than the original Erasmus!

A deal was struck with the union that teachers would be assigned by seniority to the small school of their choice. This deal ensured the union's cooperation for the plan

1 Regents Examinations are New York statewide exams in many subject areas—English, global history, American history, sequential math, languages, sciences—that are now mandatory for all graduating students during their four years of high school. Although these exams have existed for many years, recently, in accordance with the movement toward higher standards, they have become mandatory for graduating. The exams have been phased in gradually, and students take them at the completion of specific courses in the statewide curriculum.

of dividing up Erasmus. Teachers also had the option of transferring to another Brooklyn school.

More teachers chose to retire than to transfer, and the more experienced teachers joined either the Business or Science schools. Their choice was based in part on the focus of the school, but was probably as much because Carolyn Wagner, who was widely disliked by teachers who feared change or student-centered teaching, was the acting interim principal of Humanities.

Carolyn had become the magnet for the teachers favoring reform. Thus, many of the teachers who ended up at Humanities were committed to change, had a sense of optimism, were less cynical than the staffs of the other two schools, and were the youngest and least experienced. These teachers were predominantly white and middle-class and would be working in a school of immigrant Caribbean, and African-Caribbean and African-American students, a large percentage of whom would not graduate in four years. Many students take five or six years to graduate; others drop out altogether. In addition to the principal, there would be two other administrators, one for administration and one for guidance. There was no administrator specifically responsible for student supervision or staff development.

Carolyn Wagner, Principal—Agent of Change

Carolyn Wagner began her teaching career as an English teacher at Curtis High School on Staten Island. When I interviewed her about her history as an educator, she described herself as a "personality" teacher, one who dominated the classroom and entranced her students into learning. Even now, one of her attributes as a leader is that she commands attention through sheer force of personality.

In the 1980s, Carolyn attended an administrative program at Baruch College and in 1990 became the assistant principal of language arts at the old Erasmus. The following year she entered the doctoral program for future principals at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her Baruch experience, her on-the-job training, and especially her experience in the program at Teachers College, began to transform her vision of a good educator. At Teachers College she was introduced to the works of Thomas Sergiovani, Gary Wehlege, and especially Frank Smith, and began to think about the nature of leadership and student learning—active, experiential learning. She began to realize that the teacher-centered "chalk and talk" format for teaching—the kind she herself had become so expert at early in her career—would not enable the students at Erasmus to succeed. She considered how the absence of competition can motivate learning and what hands-on learning can mean when applied to a school curriculum. What she took away from this academic work on leadership was the potential effectiveness of partnerships and teamwork in administering a school. Her determination to become a principal came from a deep-seated belief that a leader can create the climate for change, not by dictation but by modeling and by helping to create a critical mass of people, not necessarily a majority, to share the responsibilities of change and leadership.

In the spring of 1994, before I began working at the school, Carolyn was appointed acting interim principal of Humanities, which was scheduled to open that fall. She immediately started holding meetings for anyone interested in planning the new school. The meetings were attended by approximately ten teachers, mostly English, who had either come to Erasmus at her request or had been drawn into the web of her thinking through her modeling. The meetings were held in the old English department office and in coffee shops around the city on evenings and weekends. The group hammered out a plan for creating the new school without any help from outside sources. They received no start-up money. A vision—a mission statement—emerged from these meetings before the school was set to begin operations.

At the heart of this vision were two main goals: the empowerment of students through collaborative, student-centered learning, and the empowerment of teachers through school-based planning. The group's goal was to create an environment where everyone would be a teacher, a learner, and a student.

Mission Statement of Erasmus Hall Campus
School for Humanities and Performing Arts

A caring community where everyone is a teacher, a learner and a leader.

The staff, parents, and students of the Campus School of Humanities at Erasmus Hall will be committed to academic excellence and the education of all students to their fullest potential by enabling them to work both collaboratively and independently as thinkers, problem solvers, and decision makers.

Although the Humanities staff included many of the ten or so original members of the planning committee (the critical mass), the remainder of the faculty were remnants of the old school—most of whom opposed the restructuring—and newly-appointed or newly-assigned teachers with minimal experience. Carolyn's challenges were to reduce the influence of the naysayers, create an environment that would nurture the growth of the new teachers, and get Humanities off the SURR list. When the new school opened its doors in the fall of 1994, the staff consisted of approximately fifty teachers, and the student body included approximately 800 students.

YEAR ONE: 1995–1996

Coming to Erasmus and Meeting Carolyn Wagner

On a particularly humid and rainy day in the spring of 1995, Barbara Martz, a teacher-consultant and colleague from the NYCWP, and I paid a preliminary visit to the three Erasmus schools. Two principals of the three new smaller schools, including Carolyn Wagner, attended this meeting; the third principal had not yet been chosen. Although my assignment was to work with all three schools—to offer

a graduate seminar on writing across the curriculum and to consult with participating teachers about writing in their classrooms—I was interested in working more closely with Humanities when Barbara informed me that Carolyn Wagner had been an active participant in several writing project courses at Curtis High School a few years back. Carolyn's brief comments at this meeting made me think that she understood how the work of the NYCWP could help both the teachers and the students in her school.

Because of turmoil in the school system, I did not return to the Erasmus schools until the end of October 1995 when I attended a meeting with Marcie Wolfe, director of the Institute for Literacy Studies; Linette Moorman, director of the New York City Writing Project; and the three Erasmus principals in order to map out the services the writing project would offer. We agreed that one graduate seminar, focusing on hands-on experiences in writing across the curriculum, would be offered for all three schools but that my consulting with individual teachers would be concentrated at Humanities. Participants in the graduate seminar would receive a small stipend or three free graduate credits.

Challenges of the First Year: The Graduate Seminar

It was a difficult first year. It was a terrible winter, attendance at the graduate seminar (see Appendix A for the course description) was erratic, and much of the talk and tension in the room was rooted in the history and politics of the school, of which I was still ignorant. I only knew of the old Erasmus, the Erasmus of my childhood, the Erasmus my cousins had attended. Although I was certainly aware of the problems facing schools in the inner city, I had no direct knowledge of the specific issues at Erasmus now. The staffs of all three schools were under unbearable pressure. Rumors spread that the school would be closed if student performance did not improve and that the wholesale removal of teachers would take place. Teachers were being asked to solve problems that demanded a new approach to education in which few were trained and which few were even willing to undertake. And the SURR remediation clock was ticking. In the midst of all this angst, a multimillion-dollar building renovation disrupted all activities and brought constant noise and dust to the school throughout the day. Just days before the third session of the initial seminar was to meet, teachers were informed that outside supervisors would be brought in three times a year to make sure that accountable teaching was taking place. During the seminar, the room erupted as we listened to teachers express their anger, frustration, and fears.

One of the basic tenets of the writing project, a tenet we modeled in the seminar, is that effective teacher communities are created as teachers share their practice. Erasmus needed collaborative communities to support school change. However, we discovered early on that aside from Humanities, the teaching climate at Erasmus was far from collaborative. Because of Carolyn's leadership, Humanities teachers, who comprised slightly more than one-third of the seminar, were more eager than the others to talk, share, and experiment with using writing as a tool for learning

and thinking. In the seminar, where we struggled to create a space for supportive reflection, we did not always succeed. A biology teacher who risked sharing his student's writing was viciously assaulted for failure to correct spelling and grammar. Although I certainly committed other bloopers during my tenure, happily we didn't repeat this type of error and always made sure there was sufficient preparation and trust in the room before placing a teacher in a vulnerable situation.

In the midst of the building renovation and staff chaos, Carolyn Wagner found office space and a file cabinet for me. From the beginning, Carolyn saw the possibilities of my presence at Humanities.

Consulting in the First Year

Before arriving at Erasmus, I had worked in schools where my purpose was to help teachers change their practice gradually, with slow changes that would ultimately impact the entire school community.

Now, I found myself in a school that was mandated to change quickly with a principal who had very clear ideas of which direction she wanted the school to move. At the same time, the school had to improve its performance. In order to chart these unfamiliar waters, I maintained a relatively low profile, co-coordinated the graduate seminar, met with teachers, visited classrooms only when invited, and observed. I would speak not to demonstrate my expertise, but to ask questions that would help me to better understand the school. I believed this was the best way to achieve credibility. I also began to have frequent, if irregular, conversations with Carolyn Wagner, and we began to develop a friendship.

There was an ongoing tension between my work and the two-fold mission of the school: to slowly infuse constructivist change[2] and to quickly raise Regents Examination scores. While Carolyn was instituting constructivist changes in Humanities, she and her acolytes also strongly believed that if Humanities students could pass Regents Examinations, it would demonstrate that they were as capable as students in more successful traditional academic schools. If preparation for the exam was to be the driving force in instruction, I would have to find a way to contend with that. At the same time, teachers had to learn to collaborate to develop curriculum and pedagogy; students would have to cooperate with each other in the classroom. Although the superintendent had mandated cooperative learning formats—students were required to be seated shoulder to shoulder and toe to toe in groups of four—many teachers had no idea how to a create a meaningful lesson based on collaboration. And the teachers themselves were struggling in an effort to redefine their school within a collaborative framework in which they would be empowered to make key decisions about process and curriculum. And, of course, there was continuing resistance and dissonance.

2 By constructivism, I refer to the kind of pedagogy in which the teacher creates situations in which the students, usually through projects, investigate and pose questions while inquiring into a topic. This is opposed to the more traditional "transmission" model in which the teacher provides the information that the students then learn and feed back.

In talking about these matters with Carolyn, I suggested a teacher practitioner group be formed to talk about issues concerning students, staff, and any other professional matters. An invitation went out, but only a handful of teachers showed up at the first meeting. In my eagerness to develop collaborations, I had misjudged their readiness. I was still an unknown quantity, and the ominous vibes emanating from the state and the superintendent's office were too powerful to allow any meaningful time for reflection. But I developed close professional relationships with two of the teachers who showed up and collaborated with Carolyn for the first time, so it was not a total loss.

Thus, the first year was a time of learning for me. I began a professional relationship with the principal, saw what was working in the school, what was not working, and perhaps most importantly, began to establish relationships with many of the teachers. I had begun to discover some of the spaces where my work might fit, and I had begun to realize what my work might be.

YEAR TWO: 1996–1997

Working with Carolyn

My second year at Humanities was pivotal. I helped create new structures and reinforced existing ones. Much of this work was possible because the new Students at the Center grant paid for me to be at Humanities from two to four days a week, a rare luxury for professional staff developers. Two significant events that occurred during my second year perhaps best illustrate how the partnership between Carolyn and myself worked. Both events were to play a significant part in the dynamics of restructuring. The School Based Planning (SBP) committee consisted of the entire staff, some students, and some parents. It was a decision-making body through consensus and existed prior to my arrival at Humanities. The idea of teachers running the school was sound, but the implementation wasn't working. Meetings (particularly those of the subcommittees) were somewhat chaotic, and almost no documentation existed.

At Carolyn's suggestion, I met with Lisa Lauritzen—the chair of SBP since its inception the previous year and one of the architects of Humanities—to discuss how SBP could work more effectively. Lisa found her role frustrating; it was an enormous undertaking that received little affirmative response from the staff. When I described my observations of the subcommittees where I saw little commitment and little understanding of the process of building consensus—the structure for approval of all proposals—she vigorously agreed. Moreover, some of the staff were sabotaging the SBP by not attending meetings and badmouthing the structure. Lisa and I talked and agreed that a written document describing the role of SBP, delineating responsibilities and limitations, would be a way to establish SBP anew. A volunteer committee was asked to put together a constitution; its final approval and implementation would require the support of the entire staff. About a dozen teachers volunteered, many of whom had been committed to the vision of the school since

its beginning. But a sizable minority were new teachers encouraged to join by Lisa and Carolyn. It seemed to me that the process whereby this document was constructed would be more important than the document itself.

The finished document went through a number of revisions, and Lisa constructed a series of newsprint charts that called for responses to the articles in the constitution. While the response was not nearly what she had hoped for, the constitution was finally approved by the end of the semester. The discussion about consensus led to a much wider understanding of the process. I think that most of the staff fully understood the plan. And what seemed to me to be critically important was that all future subcommittee meetings were to be documented and chaired by rotation, which came about at my suggestion and was also written into the constitution. Lisa provided folders for each subcommittee to maintain their records and agendas. In the end, SBP and its committees had power and responsibilities. This was a major change; they were making decisions and performing activities that in most other schools were done by administrators or teachers with released time. Of course, many decisions—especially those dealing with funding—remained in the hands of Carolyn, the principal, but she almost always consulted the SBP about major financial matters.

Laying the Groundwork for the Block System and the Discovery Program

Carolyn and I had often talked about the value of interdisciplinary curriculum. There had been some experience with this in the old Erasmus, and I had coordinated an interdisciplinary language and learning core for tenth grade students at another school. Carolyn suggested I sit in on the SBP subcommittee on "theme infusion" that was exploring interdisciplinary curriculum, and I agreed that it was a place I could have some influence. This was the beginning of the second significant event that would take place that year.

The subcommittee was made up of a dozen teachers who wanted to see interdisciplinary learning implemented, but only a few had experience with either team teaching or planning across subject areas. The impetus was for a link between English and social studies—perhaps this was because this was a Humanities school. I shared my own interdisciplinary classroom experience, and others shared some of what had transpired at the old Erasmus. We read articles supplied by Carolyn and Rick Lear, director of Students at the Center. I suggested that the teachers visit schools engaged in interdisciplinary instruction. Carolyn arranged for a group to visit Paul Robeson High School, and I arranged for Bill Klann, an extraordinarily gifted teacher committed to reform, and me to visit La Guardia International High School. Carolyn even arranged for several teachers to attend a conference in Texas where Heidi Hayes Jacobs, the "doyenne" of interdisciplinary thematic teaching, presented a session. Two directions stood out for the committee after all its work: extended time periods (block scheduling) and thematic teaching across the disciplines. I further suggested that while it might not always be possible to link subject matter, students who were exposed to similar instructional techniques would be beneficiaries of another kind of interdisciplinary strategy.

At my suggestion, a pilot program was established for the second semester. Four teachers volunteered—English, social studies, math, and science—and a group of about thirty students was scheduled in each class. The teachers were to meet weekly, and I volunteered to facilitate the meetings.

Despite the hard work and planning, this pilot program floundered from the start: it was hard to find time to meet; the intricacies of programming prevented all the students from remaining together in all four classes; and no common theme or instructional goals were chosen. Yet the experience—or its failure—led to discussions that resulted in block program scheduling for all incoming ninth-graders, that would begin the following year, my third year of service at Humanities.

One memorable moment, however, came about as the result of the pilot program. In the fourth semester of the graduate seminar, we were using the Prospect descriptive processes (a way of looking at children or children's work very closely that was developed by Patricia Carini[3]) to take a closer look at students and student work. Sandy, an English teacher, was presenting a description of one of the students in the pilot program. The presentation consisted of some background on the student, her educational progress, her strengths as a student, and some of the areas where Sandy believed she needed work. The purpose was to describe the student without judgment and to ask the group to offer some constructive feedback on how the teacher might proceed with the student. After Sandy completed her presentation, Richard, a science teacher, commented that until he listened to the description, he never really knew the child. The student was in his biology class, and he had never "seen" her before he listened to Sandy's description. He didn't know anything about her background, and while her performance in his class was average, he had never taken a closer look at her strengths as a learner. This is the power of communal work.

In my second year, as in the first, I co-coordinated the graduate seminar, consulted with teachers, and met with Carolyn. But this year, I also played a major role in school change. I helped invigorate SBP, which led to schoolwide adoption of the constitution. In an SBP subcommittee, I helped lay the groundwork for major changes the next year: block scheduling and the Discovery Program, in which eight ninth grade teachers in English, social studies, math, and science, would teach the same block of students and incorporate student-centered learning based on writing project activities.

YEAR THREE: 1997–1998

To prepare the teachers for block scheduling, prior to the opening of school in the fall of 1997, Barbara Martz and I, at Carolyn's invitation, conducted a four-session workshop. Teachers who volunteered for the Discovery Program the previous spring were invited, as well as nine newly hired, inexperienced teachers. Our primary goal was to model how to teach the 100-minute block, which was new to the staff. Secondly, the ninth grade teachers now calling themselves the Discovery block

3 *From Another Angle: Children's Strengths and School Standards*, by Patricia F. Carini and Margaret Himley (Teachers College Press, 2000), introduces readers to the descriptive review process developed at The Prospect Center. The Center also has a website: www.prospectcenter.org/institutes.html.

would begin their work on selecting a unifying theme, creating guiding questions, and planning their lessons across disciplines whenever possible.

Carolyn provided critical support for the Discovery Program by arranging staff development time for the ninth-grade team to meet three times a month on Wednesday afternoons. I facilitated the meetings. Since most of the teachers had participated in one or more of the graduate seminars where many of these writing-to-learn strategies had been modeled, they had a common ground of experiences to share. In the Wednesday meetings, they shared information about students, planned lessons that could support interdisciplinary work, and primarily got to know one another. The meetings went well, although issues emerged. Not everyone agreed about the efficacy of interdisciplinary teaching, and a few teachers were cynical about any kind of school reform until students behaved differently. It was difficult to develop parallel curriculums centering around the chosen theme, Continuity and Change, and the math and science teachers were feeling the pressure of the statewide Regents Examinations at the end of the year. Nonetheless, a community, consisting of ninth grade teachers committed to students, emerged, although student-centered learning remained more of a goal than a reality. Trying to provide a structure for these teachers to communicate, as well as plan, was an arduous task. To facilitate communication and promote leadership, I requested that teachers rotate responsibility for documenting the meetings through minutes and allowing everyone to have a voice through "go-arounds." (Experience with SBP proved a useful precedent.) Despite the challenges, almost all the teachers found the extended time valuable and preferable to shorter periods.

Lisa Lauritizen, who was teaching English in the Discovery Program, and I felt the group was becoming too dependent on me, so it was agreed that an in-house coordinator would facilitate the group the following year. Supporting the decision, Carolyn was able to get time compensation for the coordinator. I would continue to play a role in team meetings during the years I remained at Humanities, especially as the block programming evolved into the tenth and eleventh grades. But my role would never be as active. I was available as a consultant, a listener, and an advisor for specific issues that emerged. But I had helped to create the structure for team meetings and believed that now the teachers could take responsibility for shaping and using the structure.

Developing A Student-Centered Curriculum

The most significant work that came out of the first year of the Discovery Program, the work that was truly the most interdisciplinary, was the work done by Lisa Lauritzen and Kress Behlen, one of the two teams of English and social studies teachers. I met regularly with them to assist in their planning. They employed a variety of student-centered strategies (almost all of which had been modeled in the graduate seminar), supported each other's curriculum, and developed a humanities program.

Lisa and Kress decided to adapt the portfolio model from the graduate seminar as the major assessment project for their Discovery classes. Students kept their work in folders throughout the year and maintained reflective journals on every project they worked on. Lisa and Kress devoted the better part of the final marking period to having the students take a closer look at the year's work and gave them very specific guidelines for choosing what they were most proud of, what they were least satisfied with, which piece showed greatest improvement, and which piece was most creative. Students could choose from either English or social studies work. Students were taken carefully through each step, and most of the work was done in both classes. Thus, for at least three weeks, often for eight hours a week (four block periods), students were engaged in self-assessment of the entire year's learning. The final product was placed within the covers of a portfolio, and the teacher's assessment process (in the form of a rubric) was clearly spelled out for every student. Closure came in a celebratory read-around where each student read part of his cover letter (another structure borrowed from the graduate seminar). The work was so extraordinary, so deep, so full of student learning, that these portfolios became the centerpiece of what I presented at the annual Students at the Center conference[4] the following year. I kept Carolyn informed of this work, and she used the student portfolios as the showpiece of the school's best practices when VIPs (including the superintendent and representatives of the chancellor's office) came to visit and evaluate the school.

Thoughts on Closure

As I look back and review the five years that I worked at Humanities, I see three pivotal strands. First, my partnership with Carolyn Wagner; second, continuing my presence at Erasmus for five years; and third, the role of the graduate seminar, which provided the training ground for school culture and classroom and structural changes.

Perhaps the most important factor was my partnership with Carolyn Wagner, which evolved and flourished during my five years at Humanities. Carolyn and I shared a vision of reform and community. She and I shared theories of learning and school change. Her own experience as a participant in the New York City Writing Project made her aware of the possibilities of the project for her staff. Because I arrived at a time of great flux, she was able to use me as a sounding board for her ideas and was open to my suggestions just as I was open to hers. As one teacher remarked, my presence and work freed her from conducting her own staff development. Of course, in keeping with the school mission, I was not only a teacher, I was a learner.

Carolyn was a principal who believed in collaboration, and collaboration was constantly being modeled in the seminar. She believed in the empowerment of teachers, and this was also practiced in the seminar as I invited teachers to co-coordinate and take charge, thus becoming responsible for the staff development of their colleagues. Carolyn and I were an effective match.

4 Students at the Center (SATC) included programs in three cities—New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. A conference was held during each year of SATC's duration. New York City was the location for the third conference, which included presentations of the work in the schools, followed by school visits. Professional developers from all three cities attended, as well as representatives of DeWitt Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund.

My five-year relationship with Humanities was a luxury that paid off with big dividends. The first year, I studied the school and became known. The second year laid the groundwork for major reform by choosing directions for the reform and identifying and building leadership. The third year, the first year that major reform was implemented, was rocky. But, because of my work in the prior three years, during my final two years at Humanities, I was accepted as a member of the staff even though I was only there two days a week. During this time, the major structural reform—the block program—was extended to both the tenth and eleventh grades. With Carolyn's support, I encouraged members of the staff to assume positions of leadership, both in the graduate seminar and in mentoring new teachers, and the teachers who had come up through the graduate seminars were running the Discovery Program and SBP.

In their article in the Fall 1995 issue of the *Harvard Educational Review*, "Script, Counterscript, and Underlife in the Classroom," Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larsen speak of a third space where teachers can do some new thinking and practicing without the encumbrances of the old ways. Nowhere was this more evident than in the graduate seminar, which is now in its tenth semester as I write. Carolyn's support was crucial in the success of this project. Her bulletins always advertised the commencement of each seminar; she frequently reported the positive response of participants and not so subtly required new teachers to participate. A significant number of teachers with whom I have worked have transformed their classrooms through student-centered teaching, the beginnings of which can be traced to these graduate seminars. The graduate seminars played a pivotal role not only in affecting pedagogy, but in creating a community of shared values and commitment to students and learning. Most of the issues concerning reform were discussed in the seminars.

The seminars were an informal training in leadership. They were also the place where I was first able to perceive who the potential leaders of the school could be. Carolyn and I agreed at the beginning that the traditional staff meeting, in which the principal tells the staff what they have to do, was at odds with the school mission and a culture of collaboration. In my first year, I conducted faculty and department workshops by recruiting members of the graduate seminar to assist and to lead small-group meetings. These meetings, at which teachers modeled hands-on experiences and facilitated professional discussions on pedagogical issues, were effective and were themselves a model for two very successful teacher-directed staff development days in years four and five.

In the seminars, I also modeled meeting facilitation. It was a point of pride, for example, in the second year when at one meeting I attended, the rotating chair concluded the meeting by asking participants to write down their reflections on what had happened during the meeting—what stood out, what was accomplished, what remains to be done. This use of writing, modeled in the seminar, was beginning to be integrated into the practice of the school.

In retrospect, I see challenges and obstacles, patterns of change and hopeful successes. Challenges and obstacles remain. The structures that are in place are, at best,

fragile. There are still large numbers of the staff who do not buy in to the vision for the school. Another major problem that continues to affect the school and erode support is the frequent turnover of staff, including not only new teachers, but important veterans. Often, I thought of myself as a new teacher trainer. SBP participation has become voluntary rather than mandatory because of state requirements about the number of hours of instruction. And there is generally little support from the superintendent's office, a sign that there is still little understanding as to why block scheduling pays dividends.

As for patterns of change, often a project that seemed to have failed one year in fact seeded a reform that blossomed the following year, such as the teacher practitioners group the first year and the SBP subcommittee the second year. The block schedule tryout the third year was shaky, but the subsequent implementation in the fourth and fifth years benefited and grew from the pilot.

An early success was the removal of Humanities from the SURR remediation list in 1996 when scores on some standardized exams went up. This, however, created ongoing tensions. The threat of recidivism was always lurking, as the state issued new standards and produced new exams to measure how well teachers and students were meeting these standards. Teachers were under pressure to teach to the Regents Examination while a student-centered constructivist model underlay the professional development in the graduate seminars. Yet many of the teachers continued to struggle with finding ways to actively engage the students, and I helped the emerging leaders become models of constructivist teaching. While the school, understandably, remains committed to improving its Regents Examination scores, the seminar and the series of staff development workshops continue to present models of constructivist teaching to balance the pressure of the tests.

In the end, I believe that much has been accomplished. The vast majority of Humanities teachers have participated in the graduate seminars. The SBP committee, though under constant threat, remains a potential tool for teacher empowerment. The model of leaders emerging from the staff to teach other teachers has taken place. Block programming has become a crucial part of the learning environment at Humanities and is supported by even those who resist other changes. I like to think that a culture of sharing, of collaboration, has begun to take root.

APPENDIX A: THE GRADUATE SEMINAR

Although it was clear that I shared principal Carolyn Wagner's vision for Humanities, and that I was working with her invitation, my slow and deliberate emergence over time as a respected individual allowed me access to the teachers. Nowhere was this more evident than in the graduate seminar, now in its tenth semester. At first, these seminars were open to the staffs of all three Erasmus schools, and in the second year only to the Humanities and Business schools, which were participating in the Students at the Center program. During the last two years, the courses have been open only to Humanities teachers, but the Humanities staff has always dominated them. Nearly two thirds of the current Humanities staff (this does not include the significant number of teachers who have left the school) have participated in one or another graduate seminar. Bill Klann, English teacher, dean, co-coordinator, and teacher-leader, remarked that the seminar was the one place in the school where teachers of all persuasions and pedagogical practices could come together to express their views and share their practices without any fears. For the first four years, each seminar had at least fifteen Humanities participants; the past two classes contained twelve.

Although the content of the seminars shifted—introduction to writing across the curriculum, the connection between reading and writing in the classroom, inquiry into teaching and students—the courses were all designed to model student-centered teaching strategies that used writing as a tool for learning and thinking, to share classroom practices, to name the learning theories that supported such practices, and to develop and preserve a community of reflective practitioners. Texts for the seminars were readings from professional journals and the teachers' own writings. Teachers kept journals in which they responded to articles and looked at their own classroom practices or individual students' learning. Pedagogical practices that modeled active and interactive responses—point-of-view writing, text rendering, double-entry note taking, dialectical journals, I-search research processes, literature logs, scaffolding essays—were modeled and applied. Each semester, the participants produced a publication of their own writings that were models of what could be done in the classroom. For several semesters, each teacher was required to undertake a curriculum project in which they would write about the classroom application of something they learned in the course.

The most powerful projects were the portfolios in which the teachers looked at their work over the semester and assessed what they had learned. These portfolios were shared in groups with each teacher using Post-it Notes to respond to parts of the portfolios. Although many teachers were unable to create constructivist classrooms with their students, almost all the teachers who participated in these seminars have adapted the various practices into their teaching. Sometimes it takes much longer

for the theory to percolate. Yet there are a significant number of teachers with whom I have worked who have transformed their classrooms through student-centered teaching, the beginnings of which can be traced to these graduate seminars. While this work remains incomplete, the notion of teachers teaching teachers has been established at Humanities.

APPENDIX B: GRADUATE SEMINAR COURSE DESCRIPTION

Lehman College
Division of English, City University of New York
Instructor: Nick D'Alessandro
Text/s: Collections of articles and selected chapters from books in bibliography.
ENG 684, Section 11, Fall 1999. Seminar in Writing Theory. 3 credits.

Course Description

This course is designed for classroom teachers. Course participants examine and evaluate current research on composing and current research on the teaching of writing in all areas of the curriculum. In addition to completing and responding to reading assignments, participants design lessons using writing, keep reflective journals, and attend presentations by invited guests. Through the use of guidelines for composing, exchanging feedback on drafts of writing in peer response groups, editing and publishing, teachers experience the process of moving from informal to formal writing. As a consequence, they begin to understand how writing can be used as a tool for thinking and learning.

Courses offered by the New York City Writing Project are based on a set of beliefs and assumptions about language and learning.

- Learning is a process that is unique to each individual.
- Learning is a process by which a person actively constructs meaning from experience, including encounters with a variety of written, verbal, and visual texts.
- Learning is social and collaborative; it is best promoted within the context of a supportive and diverse community.
- The development of language and literacy flourishes when serving real-life purposes.
- Writing and reading are recursive.
- Race, ethnicity, gender, and social class have an impact on the ways in which learners interpret and respond to school and home experience.

Participants learn about the teaching and multiple uses of writing and reading by experiencing these acts and by observing and noting what happens when they, their classmates, and their students compose and make meaning from a variety of texts.

Course Goals/Performance Outcomes

Participant will be able to articulate a theory of writing instruction. They will learn by experiencing and reflecting upon the processes involved in composing, including the metacognitive processes. They will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the relationships among writing, learning, and the social construction of meaning, as well as how to select materials and socially interactive classroom procedures to support this learning.

Instructional Approaches

1. The course is experiential in nature. Therefore, full participation by sharing work in small and large groups, and regular attendance and punctuality are essential, as is the timely completion of reading and writing assignments, projects, and presentations.
2. Students write in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes and audiences. Writing assignments may be generated from response to reading, from classroom practice, or from personal experience. Informal writing is credited but ungraded. Unrevised writing done inside and out of the class is viewed as part of the composing process of the writer leading to the crafting of more formal writing. Rough drafts that demonstrate revision and evidence of growth and that lead to final edited pieces are submitted as part of the final grade. The grade will be affected by the participant's level of involvement in the process as well as the quality of the work submitted.

Course Outline

Session 1: Introduction to Writing as a Process

Session 2: Understanding and Working with Writing in Assumed Roles in Response to Text

Session 3: Exploring Strategies for Generating Writing

Session 4: Using Peer Response to Writing

Session 5: Exploration of Revision and Response

Session 6: Exploring the Theory of Writing in the Service of Learning

Session 7: Exploring Assignments and Ways of Commenting on Student Writing

Session 8: Uses of Journal Writing Across the Curriculum

Session 9: Student Presentations of Teaching Writing in the Disciplines

Session 10: Addressing Issues of Correctness in Student Writing

Session 11: Publishing and Celebrating Student and Teacher Work

Session 12: Course Evaluation and Preparation of Anthology Pieces

Course readings may include but are not limited to the following:

Christine Cziko. "Peer Dialogue Journals: Passing Notes the Academic Way." *The Quarterly of the National Writing Project.* Fall 1995.

Nick D'Alessandro. "Things that Don't Have to Do with English: The Hidden Agenda." *Meeting the Challenges: Stories from Today's Classrooms.* Heinemann, 1996

Peter Elbow. *Writing Without Teachers.* Oxford University Press. 1998.

——*Writing With Power.* Oxford University Press. 1998.

Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff. "Double-entry or Dialectical Notebooks." *A Community of Writers: A Workshop Course in Writing.* Random House, 1989.

Kathryn, T. Flannery. "Performance and the Limits of Writing." *Journal of Teaching Writing,* Vol. 16, No.1.

Toby Fulwiler. "Why We Teach Writing in the First Place." *Teaching With Writing.* Boynton/Cook, 1987.

George Hillocks, Jr. "A View of Writing and Students," "Some Basics for Thinking About Teaching Writing," "Integrating Theories for Teaching Writing," *Teaching Writing as Reflective Practice.* Teachers College Press, 1995.

James Moffett. *Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curricuum.* Boynton/Cook, 1992.

Donald Murray. "Making Meaning Clear: The Logic of Revision." *Research on Composing: Points of Departure.* Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell, eds. NCTE, 1978.

Judith Newman. "Learning to Teach by Uncovering Our Assumptions." *Language Arts.* November 1987.

Sondra Perl. "A Writer's Way of Knowing: Guidelines for Composing." *Presence of Mind: Writing and the Domain Beyond the Cognitive.* Alice Glarden Brand and Richard L. Graves, ed. Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1994.

Nancy Sommers. "Between the Drafts." *Landmark Essays on Writing Process.* Sondra Perl, ed. Hermagoras Press, 1994.

Brenda Ueland. "Tell Me More: On the Fine Art of Listening." *UTNE Reader.*

Various handouts of the New York City Writing Project.

Selections from the New York City Writing Project *Newsletter.*

Assessment/Expectations of Teachers

All participants receive a commitment sheet at the first session of the course, detailing the requirements and performance expectations for the successful completion of the course. These expectations include but are not limited to the following:

1. The maintenance of a professional journal throughout the course is required. In this journal, it is expected that students will write both in class and at home on a regular basis. They will use the journal for reflective writing about the metacognitive processes surrounding writing, reading, and learning within the course setting and in their secondary classrooms. The journal also comprises written responses to scholarly articles, full-length works of fiction or nonfiction, and other assigned readings. Finally, the journal includes notes on course discussions and activities, and reflections on teaching and learning.
2. In writing groups, participants share drafts of their writing and exchange informal responses for the purpose of revising the work. Ultimately, their notes and the content of these small group discussions provide the foundation for developing formal pieces of writing.

3. Throughout the course, students are expected to reflect on their classroom practice and to explore ways to integrate course activities and concepts into their various disciplines. They are required to prepare a portfolio demonstrating their teaching and learning over the course of a semester or design a final project that demonstrates they have developed a classroom unit or activity for teaching writing and reading that implements some of the key aspects of the work modeled in the course. A detailed description of the project will be distributed by the instructor during the course.

The following is an example of a typical project assignment:

Each project should include the design of a unit that incorporates writing, a description of the teaching of that unit, assessment of student work, and a self-assessment of teacher performance. It should also include a collection of a range of student writing samples produced in connection with that unit. This project must be submitted as a well-organized, typed document. Both form and content will be considered in determining the grade. Meeting the criteria for this project will count for 25% of the overall course grade.

Students are expected to make formal presentations of their projects or portfolios for their colleagues in the course.

Grading

Participation in small- and large-group activities: 25%

Journal: 25%

Drafts and final revision: 25%

Project and Presentation: 25%

Unexcused absences, any pattern of lateness, and failure to submit assignments in a timely manner will result in a reduction of the grade. A grade of incomplete will be given to anyone doing satisfactory work who has not completed all of the assigned work of the course.

Nancy Mintz, co-director of middle school programs for the New York City Writing Project, Lehman College, The City University of New York, taught grades six through nine for twenty-eight years before becoming an on-site teacher-consultant for the New York City Writing Project in 1996. She now provides professional development in literacy education for New York City middle schools. An active member of the National Writing Project, she is on the Leadership Team for NWP's Urban Sites Network. Her occasional paper, "Collaborative Conversations for Literacy: Professional Development in a Middle-School Classroom," is published by the NYCWP.

Alan L. Stein taught social studies in New York City high schools for many years before joining the New York City Writing Project in 1991 as a teacher-consultant. He has coordinated graduate seminars and worked with teachers on ways to incorporate writing-to-learn strategies into diverse curricula. He is the author of articles and curriculum guides and co-editor of the anthology *China: Readings on the Middle Kingdom*. Now semiretired, Alan continues to facilitate workshops on the multiple aspects of writing across the curriculum.

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